Officer Safety in Indian Country ? Reversing a Deadly Trend

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On May 5th I had the honor of speaking at the 20th Annual Indian Country Law Enforcement Officer's Memorial Service at the [Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Artesia, New Mexico](#) [4]. We recognized and paid our respects to seven fallen officers and added their names to the [Indian Law](#)

[Enforcement Officer's Memorial](#) [5].

The sacrifice that these officers made is a reminder of the dangers of police work and the unique challenges of doing that work in Indian Country. Further, it should inspire those of us in the information sharing business to scrutinize and evaluate what we can do to deliver tools, techniques, and procedures to make officers in Indian Country, and elsewhere, safer and more effective.

Deadly Statistics
The number of officers killed in the line of duty is on the rise. We witnessed a nearly 40% increase from 2009 to 2010, and so far 2011 is on track to be even worse. This is a trend that we must reverse. In Indian Country, the rates of violent crime for all Indians continue to outpace any other demographic, [according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics](#) [6]. In addition, a scarcity of resources, jurisdictional confusion, and a lack of access to criminal databases makes even routine police calls in Indian Country inherently more dangerous.

Improving Information Access
I am proud to say that the [International Association of Chiefs of Police](#) [7] (IACP), for which I am Chair of the Indian Country Section, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Justice?s Bureau of Justice Assistance, has established [The Center for the Prevention of Violence Against the Police](#) [8]. The center, in conjunction with IACP?s [Project SafeShield](#) [9] and with funding from the [Bureau of Justice Assistance](#) [10], gathers comprehensive data from state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies on assaults and other acts of violence toward police officers. Center staff analyzes that data and provides meaningful, life-saving information and direction to the field on steps that should be taken to minimize officer injuries and fatalities.

Delivering Tools To Help

Additionally, the [National Crime Information Center](#) [11] and the [Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative Program Management Office](#) [12] can provide the training and tools to help agencies effectively share information ? information that can tip an officer conducting a routine traffic stop that he or she is dealing with a suspected terrorist or violent criminal. The Tribal Law and Order Act, which President Obama signed into law last year, laid the groundwork for tribal access to these tools.

I look forward to continuing to work with all agencies ? federal, state, local, and tribal ? to improve funding, governance, and the delivery of standards and technology to help ensure the safety and effectiveness of our officers in and near Indian Country.

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